

Statement of
Representative Steve Stivers
National Defense Priorities from Members for the FY14 NDAA
May 8, 2013

I want to thank Chairman McKeon and Ranking Member Smith for holding this hearing to allow Members to testify on behalf of their military personnel, assets, and community in our districts around the country – I would like to speak to Rickenbacker Air National Guard Base (RANGB), specifically.

As many are aware, the President submitted his fiscal year (FY) 2014 budget to Congress on April 15, 2013 to fund the government – including the Department of Defense (DoD). I was troubled to learn that the President and the Pentagon are again requesting a new round of Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) in 2015.

In its latest review of the 2005 BRAC program the Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that the estimated cost of \$21 billion to implement the program had grown to \$35 billion by September 30, 2011. With these figures, it should give Congress pause in granting a new round of BRAC in 2015.

I would urge the committee to seriously consider the implications a new round of BRAC would have on our military and civilian personnel and particularly the potential impact it would have on the 121st Air Refueling Wing located at RANGB in Columbus, Ohio. The 121st is part of an operational reserve that can be called upon daily to conduct refueling and other missions around the world. I respectfully ask the committee to carefully review any proposal calling for a new round of BRAC.

Last year, the 2013 National Defense Authorization Act permitted the Air Force to retire six of the 18 KC-135 refueling aircraft currently stationed at RANGB. In addition to the short-term impact — the loss of nearly 200 jobs — I am concerned that the force structure change will negatively impact the economies of scale achieved at the base. The most recent findings of a RAND Corporation study show that RANGB, in its current configuration, is the second most cost-effective refueling operation in the Air National Guard. Compared to the active duty, the Air National Guard across the nation only costs 30 cents per dollar, where as active is dollar for dollar.

Being so cost-effective, I ask the committee's support for my Central and Southeast Ohio community that provide the manpower for RANGB and is well positioned strategically and economically to base the new KC-46 refueling aircraft mission. The Air Force announced January 9, 2013 that RANGB is one of five Air National Guard bases to be nominated as a candidate for the new aircraft and the site review process has begun. This month, the Air Force will announce the final two bases and I urge the committee to support Rickenbacker being the first KC-46 Air Refueling Wing in the Air National Guard. This would be a tremendous boost for the base, would help solidify the mission there in the long-term, and would help secure the tens of millions in economic impact derived from having the Air National Guard mission located at Rickenbacker.

Also, I would like to bring to the attention of the committee the opportunity to give the DoD guidance and direction on the possibility of future cost-sharing ventures with civilian aviation authorities to modernize joint military/civilian air traffic control towers.

I would request that the committee consider policy that would allow collaborative funding between the DoD and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to provide the best opportunity to manage critical aviation infrastructure investments by stakeholders with a joint military/civilian control tower – like Rickenbacker in my district.

Lastly, if a BRAC occurs in 2015 or DoD seeks programmatic changes, the committee should consider the impact of current criteria standards that disproportionately cause a negative rankings for Air Guard and Reserve bases – such as Rickenbacker – as compared to active duty bases. As you thoroughly review and craft the FY2014 National Defense Authorization Act, I request that this committee seek separate criteria standards to rank active Air Force and Air National Guard/Reserve bases.

Again, I appreciate the Chairman and Ranking Member for allowing me to testify today in support of my community and the Rickenbacker Air National Guard Base.